

Amendments to the Specification:

On amended page 1, line 10, above the paragraph beginning "The oxides produced in...", insert the header:

--BACKGROUND--

On page 2, line 13, above the paragraph beginning "The invention is therefore based...", insert:

--SUMMARY--

On page 3, line 25, in the space above the paragraph beginning with "The invention will be explained...", insert:

--BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING--

On page 2, line 30, in the space above the paragraph beginning with "The wafer is heated...", insert:

--DETAILED DESCRIPTION--

Replace the paragraph beginning on amended page 1, line 5, which begins with "The invention relates to," with the following header and new paragraph:

--FIELD OF INVENTION

The invention relates to a method for improving thermal process steps in the patterning of semiconductor wafers, in particular in rapid thermal processing (RTP) processes preferably during AA (active area) oxidation, sacrificial oxidation, and GC (gate conductor) sidewall oxidation.--

Amendments to the abstract

Please replace the originally filed abstract with the following new abstract:

--A method for controlling temperature of a semiconductor wafer in a process chamber includes heating the chamber from a starting temperature to a stabilizing temperature at a heating rate of approximately 12 degrees Celsius per second and maintaining the chamber at the stabilizing temperature for a selected stabilization period. The chamber is then heated from the

stabilizing temperature to a process temperature at a heating rate of approximately 10 degrees Celsius per second. This process temperature is maintained for a selected processing period. After the period, the chamber is cooled to an exit temperature at a selected low cooling rate.--